



CBS NEWS POLL
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THE REPUBLICAN RACE: MCCAIN SOLIDIFIES FRONT-RUNNER STATUS

January 30 - Feb 2, 2008

Senator John McCain's "Straight Talk Express" rolls into Super Tuesday with the Arizonan viewed by wide margins as the candidate who says what he believes, who is the most electable in November, and who would be the best Commander-in-Chief. Those traits have propelled McCain to a solid lead over his rivals among national Republican primary voters.

Republican voters list the economy as their top concern by far, and while McCain leads on this issue, too, Mitt Romney's ratings are closer to his -- one reason this race may still be partly in flux.

THE NATIONAL RACE

After wins in South Carolina and a Republicans-only primary in Florida, John McCain has solidified his status as the national front-runner for his party's nomination. Mitt Romney has risen, too, but is outpaced by McCain.

REPUBLICAN CHOICE FOR THE NOMINATION

(Among Republican Primary Voters)

	Now	1/08	12/07
McCain	46%	33%	7%
Romney	23	8	16
Huckabee	12	18	21

Among voters in Super Tuesday states the lead is similar.

Some have wondered whether McCain could draw support from all camps in the GOP (and he has run behind among conservatives in some primaries), but in this poll McCain leads among conservatives as well as among moderates.

The race is still fluid, but has solidified some since last month: the number of Republican primary voters who have made up their minds has jumped 21 points.

MIND MADE UP ABOUT WHOM TO SUPPORT?

(Among Republican Primary Voters with a Choice)

	Now	1/08
Yes	48%	27%
Too early	52	72

Republican voters now also voice stronger allegiance to their preference. The number who like their choice a lot better than the other candidates has nearly doubled.

DO YOU LIKE YOUR CANDIDATE...

(Among Republican Primary Voters with a Choice)

	Now	1/08
A lot better than others	39%	20%
Somewhat better	42	45
Only a little better	18	35

WHY MCCAIN IS LEADING

McCain has two very strong qualities that make him stand out for Republican voters: he is seen as the most electable nominee, and the best Commander-in-Chief.

McCain leads, but by a smaller margin, on immigration and taxes, where he has had differences with many in his party. He leads Romney on economic and tax issues. The difference on these issues is in single digits.

WHICH REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE...

(Among Republican Primary Voters)

	McCain	Romney	Huckabee	Paul
Is most electable	65%	17	2	3
Would be best Commander-in-Chief	62%	15	6	8
Would do best on Immigration	38%	22	9	10
Would do best on Economy	39%	30	9	8
Most likely to lower taxes	25%	20	13	15

Nonetheless, most - 54% - of Republican primary voters see only minor differences between the candidates on the issues. That may partly explain why McCain's leads on electability and being Commander-in-Chief coincide with his large overall lead in the race.

ISSUE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES ARE...

(Among Republican Primary Voters)

Major	35%
Minor	54

McCain has cultivated a reputation as a "straight talker," and that sets him apart in the minds of Republican voters. Most see McCain as saying what he believes. Huckabee is also mostly seen this way, though many admit they don't know enough about him. Romney, meanwhile, is more apt to be seen as just saying what people want to hear.

DO THE CANDIDATES SAY WHAT THEY BELIEVE?

(Among Republican Primary Voters)

	McCain	Romney	Huckabee
Says what he believes	56%	35%	42%
Just says what people want to hear	31	43	28

WHAT REPUBLICAN VOTERS ARE LOOKING FOR

Republicans are looking for a candidate with the right experience: it is the number one answer volunteered when they are asked why they back their candidate. It matters most to McCain's voters.

The economy still ranks as the main national problem in the minds of Republican voters; it is up again from last month and now far outdistances the war, which ranks as number two.

NATION'S MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

(Among Republican Primary Voters)

	Now	1/08	12/07
The economy/jobs	39%	22%	9%
Iraq	17	15	15
Immigration	8	12	8

VIEWS OF THE CANDIDATES

Mitt Romney has reversed last month's slide in his favorable ratings, and they are back to net positive now. But McCain is by far the most favorably-viewed of the top three Republican candidates.

VIEWS OF THE CANDIDATES

(Among Republican Primary Voters)

	Now	1/08	12/07
McCain: Favorable	56%	57%	37%
Not favorable	21	13	32
Undecided/DK	22	29	30
Romney: Favorable	34%	23%	36%
Not favorable	20	27	16
Undecided/DK	46	51	48
Huckabee: Favorable	27%	47%	30%
Not favorable	24	12	10
Undecided/DK	48	40	60

This poll was conducted among a random sample of 1232 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone January 30-Feb 2, 2008. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher. Error for Republican Primary voters could be plus or minus six points.

CBS NEWS POLL

The Republican Race: McCain Solidifies Front-Runner Status
January 30-February 2, 2008

q1 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q2 What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?

	Republican primary voters	Jan08c
	%	%
Economy /Jobs	39	22
War in Iraq	17	15
Immigration	8	12
Terrorism (general)	6	7
Health Care	4	3
Defense/Military	3	2
Other	20	36
DK/NA	3	3

q3 - q36 RELEASED SEPARATELY

q37 Who would you like to see the Republican party nominate as its presidential candidate in 2008 -- John McCain, Mitt Romney, Mike Huckabee, or Ron Paul?

McCain	46	33
Romney	23	8
Huckabee	12	18
Giuliani	--	10
Thompson	--	8
Hunter	--	1
Paul	9	5
Someone else /None (Vol.)	2	2
Undecided (Vol.)	7	13
DK/NA	1	2

q38 Is your mind made up or is it still too early to say for sure?

	REPUBLICANPRIMARY VOTERS	
	WITH A CANDIDATE CHOICE IN Q37	
Mind made up	48	27
Too early to say for sure	52	72
DK/NA	0	1

q39 What specifically is it about (Selected Candidate) that makes you want to support (him/her)?

	REPUBLICAN PRIMARY VOTERS WITH A CANDIDATE CHOICE IN Q37	Dec07a
	%	%
Right experience	21	23
Agree on issues	19	16
Honesty/integrity/trustwor	7	12
Like him/her	4	5
Represents my values	4	7
Cares about people	4	1
Conservative	4	1
Stance on Iraq War	3	1
Stance on taxes	3	0
Best candidate for job	2	1
Religious beliefs	2	3
Stance on terrorism	2	1
Other	19	26
DK/NA	6	3

q40 Would you say you like (Selected Candidate) a great deal better than any other Republican candidate for President, somewhat better than any other candidate, or only a little better than any other candidate?

	REPUBLICAN PRIMARY VOTERS WITH A CANDIDATE CHOICE IN Q37	Jan08c
A great deal	39	20
Somewhat	42	45
Only a little	18	35
Same/there's no difference	0	--
DK/NA	1	0

q41 BLANK

q42 Is your opinion of Mike Huckabee favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Mike Huckabee yet to have an opinion?

	REPUBLICAN PRIMARY VOTERS	
Favorable	27	47
Not favorable	24	12
Undecided	20	16
Haven't heard enough	28	24
Refused	1	1

q43 Is your opinion of John McCain favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about John McCain yet to have an opinion?

Favorable	56	57
Not favorable	21	13
Undecided	12	20
Haven't heard enough	10	9
Refused	1	1

q44 Is your opinion of Mitt Romney favorable, not favorable, undecided, or haven't you heard enough about Mitt Romney yet to have an opinion?

	REPUBLICAN PRIMARY VOTERS	Jan08c
	%	%
Favorable	34	23
Not favorable	20	27
Undecided	24	19
Haven't heard enough	22	32
Refused	0	0

q45 BLANK

q46 When thinking about where the Republican presidential candidates stand on the most important issues facing the country today, do you think there are major differences in where the Republican presidential candidates stand on the issues, or only minor differences?

Major differences	35
Minor differences	54
The same (Vol.)	2
DK/NA	9

q47 Do you think John McCain says what he believes most of the time, or does he say what he thinks people want to hear?

		Dec07a
		%
Yes, says what he believes	56	46
No, says what people want	31	36
Don't know/No answer	13	18

q48 BLANK

q49 Do you think Mitt Romney says what he believes most of the time, or does he say what he thinks people want to hear?

Yes, says what he believes	35	42
No, says what people want	43	29
Don't know/No answer	22	29

q50-q52 BLANK

q53 Do you think Mike Huckabee says what he believes most of the time, or does he say what he thinks people want to hear?

Yes, says what he believes	42	47
No, says what people want	28	16
Don't know/No answer	30	37

q54 BLANK

q55 Regardless of how you intend to vote in 2008, which candidate do you think is most qualified to manage the economy -- Mike Huckabee, John McCain, Mitt Romney, or Ron Paul?

REPUBLICAN PRIMARY VOTERS

	%
Huckabee	9
McCain	39
Romney	30
Paul	8
Someone else /None	1
DK/NA	13

q56 Regardless of how you intend to vote in 2008, which candidate do you think is most qualified to be commander-in-chief -- Mike Huckabee, John McCain, Mitt Romney, or Ron Paul?

Huckabee	6
McCain	62
Romney	15
Paul	8
Someone else /None	1
DK/NA	8

q57 Regardless of how you intend to vote in 2008, which candidate do you think will do the best job handling the issue of illegal immigration -- Mike Huckabee, John McCain, Mitt Romney, or Ron Paul?

Huckabee	9
McCain	38
Romney	22
Paul	10
Someone else /None	1
DK/NA	20

q58 Regardless of how you intend to vote in 2008, which candidate do you think will do the best job lowering taxes -- Mike Huckabee, John McCain, Mitt Romney, or Ron Paul?

Huckabee	13
McCain	25
Romney	20
Paul	15
Someone else /None	2
DK/NA	25

q59 Regardless of how you intend to vote in 2008, which candidate do you think has the best chance of winning the general election in November -- Mike Huckabee, John McCain, Mitt Romney, or Ron Paul?

Huckabee	2
McCain	65
Romney	17
Paul	3
Someone else /None	0
DK/NA	13

	UNWEIGHTED	WEIGHTED
Total Respondents	1232	
Total Republican primary voters	325	300